

APEC Coal in Sustainable Development in the 21st Century 4 to 8 March 2002 – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

OPENING REMARKS

HE Peter Varghese
Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great honour to be invited to welcome participants to this important APEC energy forum.

Looking at the program, the speakers and audience I can see that you are in for a stimulating and, I hope, rewarding week.

The theme for this conference, coal in Sustainable Development in the 21st Century, is one that looks to the future. It recognizes the key role that coal will play in meeting expanding energy needs. It also recognizes the equal importance of the environmental and social dimensions.

The 21st Century holds the promise of high living standards for all countries. Development will put greater pressures on the environment, but governments and communities will also place pressure on industry to protect the environment. On the energy front this requires cleaner, more reliable and more abundant energy. We can also expect ongoing pressure to reduce energy costs.

The energy sector, particularly coal, certainly has some challenges ahead.

Coal in Sustainable development in the 21st Century covers a lot of ground. It is perhaps not surprising that the APEC Experts' Group on Clean Fossil Energy has, for the first time, brought together three of its regional forums to cover this topic.

The APEC Clean Fossil Energy Technical Seminar brings together people and approaches with a technical and technology transfer focus. This is the ninth seminar in this series. A seminar early in the series was held in Malaysia.

The APEC Coal Flow Seminar brings a focus and expertise based on trade and investment flows and wider policy and regulatory issues. This is the eighth workshop in this series.

The 4th APEC Coal Trade and Investment Liberalisation and Facilitation – TILF for short – Workshop has been designed to address the specific energy challenges faced by the host economy.

The combined forum brings together a wide range of expertise, covering all fields, from across APEC. It provides the basis for a multi-disciplined approach to address the economic, environmental and social challenges facing coal in the 21st Century.

The forum this week will address issues from the region-wide perspective and apply them to the particular circumstances of Malaysia.

And it comes at what I consider is a very opportune time.

Globally it has the potential to feed into the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September in Johannesburg, South Africa.

For Malaysia, it comes at an opportune time. Malaysia is relatively new to coal, having only recently decided to diversify into coal for power generation.

Whilst many of us are dealing with the challenges associated with the historical use of coal, Malaysia can plan its energy future with a clean slate, literally and figuratively. It has the opportunity to learn from others' mistakes and successes, and to adopt clean coal technologies and practices that reflect its future requirements for clean and efficient energy.

Australia welcomes the opportunity to work with Malaysia to build our common knowledge and understanding on the clean use of coal. Our cooperation has already included workshops on clean coal technology and coal utilization run by Australia in Malaysia and participation in technical and power sector management courses run in Australia.

I anticipate that this conference will provide further valuable support to Malaysia from economies throughout the region.

But this is not just a one way process. As with other APEC activities, this week is about mutually beneficial cooperation between economies.

Just as Malaysia is learning from this, we also have a lot to gain by looking at the way Malaysia is moving ahead. We can all learn from the solutions that Malaysia is putting in place to meet its energy challenges in the 21st century. The Program for this week, including the visits to modern coal power stations on Wednesday, will provide plenty of opportunities to share valuable experiences.

On behalf of the Australian government, I would like to thank Malaysia for hosting this event. I extend my thanks and congratulations to all the organisers and sponsors from Malaysia and other economies, and to the APEC Experts' Group on Clean fossil Energy for putting this excellent forum together.